We claim,

1.   An in-channel marketing and product testing system comprising:

a purchase environment module having instructions for generating a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products;

a panelist interface module configured to receive panelist input from a panelist interface, said panelist interface module arranged in selective communication with said purchase environment module and configured to receive and display said virtual purchase environment; and

a research module in communication with said panelist interface, the research module configured to allow dynamic control and manipulation of the virtual purchase environment, and configured to receive panelist input from said panelist interface module.

2.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said research module further comprises research instruments configured to facilitate analysis of said panelist input.

3.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, further comprising a fulfillment module having executable instructions configured to receive purchase orders entered by a panelist through said panelist interface.

4.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 3, further comprising a delivery module having executable instructions to implement the delivery of products according to said purchase orders.

5.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 3, further comprising a inventory module having executable instructions to track and maintain inventory availability within said system

6.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said research module is in selective communication with said panelist interface and configured to provide direct interfacing with a panelist

7.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said system is configured to allow simultaneous communication between a plurality of panelist interfaces and

said purchase environment module.

8.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said system is configured to provide a predetermined virtual purchase environment.

9   The marketing and product testing system of claim 8, wherein said predetermined virtual purchase environment simulates an existing shopping facility.

10.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said system is configured to simultaneously provide a plurality of predetermined virtual purchase environments to a plurality of panelists.

11.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said panelist's input comprises at least one of the following: answers to one or more questions provided by a researcher and panelist interactions within said virtual purchase environment.

12.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said virtual purchase environment displays at least one of following shopping stimulus: signage, advertisements, demonstration stations and coupon books.

13.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 1, wherein said system further comprises tools for allowing real-time manipulation of the virtual purchase environment

14.   An in-channel marketing and product testing system comprising:
a purchase environment module having instructions for generating a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products;
a panelist interface configured to receive panelist input and configured to receive and display said virtual purchase environment;
a fulfillment module configured to receive purchase orders from a panelist; and
a research module in communication with said panelist interface, said research module configured to enable selective control and manipulation of the virtual purchase environment and configured to receive panelist input from said panelist interface to facilitate analysis thereof.

15.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 14, wherein said system is

configured to provide a predetermined virtual purchase environment to a plurality of panelists to accommodate parallel testing of a product

16.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 14, wherein said system is configured to facilitate market testing of an identifiable characteristic of a product.

17.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 14, wherein at least one of the following characteristics of said plurality of competitive products generated within said virtual purchase environment is configured to be manipulated including a change in: price, packaging, orientation, arrangement, shelf positioning and aisle positioning.

18.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 14, wherein said generation of said virtual purchase environment is based at least in part on panelist input received.

19.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 14, wherein said research module is configured to provide analysis of a characteristic of an identifiable product displayed among said plurality of products.

20.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 14, wherein said system further comprises tools for allowing real-time manipulation of the virtual purchase environment, said real-time manipulation based at least in part on real-time panelist's input collected from interfacing with a panelist.

21.   The marketing and product testing system of claim 14, further comprising a delivery module having executable instructions to implement the delivery of products according to said purchase orders.

22.   A method of providing an in-channel marketing and product testing system comprising the steps of:
providing a purchase environment module having instructions for generating a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products;
providing a panelist interface configured to receive panelist input, said panelist interface arranged in selective communication with said purchase environment module to receive and display the virtual purchase environment;

displaying said virtual purchase environment to at least one panelist in communication with said panelist interface;

collecting a panelist's interactions with said virtual purchase environment through panelist's input into said panelist interface;

providing a fulfillment module configured to receive purchase orders from said panelist interface; and

providing a research module in communication with said purchase environment module and said panelist interface to collect said panelist input from said panelist interface

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of facilitating the analysis of said collected data with respect to a characteristic of an identifiable product displayed among said plurality of products.

24. The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of manipulating at least one of the identifiable characteristics of said products including: price, packaging, orientation, arrangement, shelf positioning and aisle positioning.

25. The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of generating the display of said virtual purchase environment based at least in part on panelist's input received.

26. The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of providing a delivery module having executable instructions to implement the delivery of products according to said purchase orders.

27. A method of collecting data relating to an identifiable characteristic of a product comprising:

providing a purchase environment module having instructions for generating a virtual purchase environment;

providing a panelist interface configured to receive panelist input and configured to receive and display the virtual purchase environment;

providing a panelist with at least one question relating to an identifiable characteristic of a product and receiving an answer to at least one of said questions through said panelist interface;

generating and displaying a virtual purchase environment based at least in part on said answer to said question;

29

collecting a panelist's interactions with said virtual purchase environment; and

providing a research module in communication with said panelist interface to receive panelist input relating to said interaction with said system.

28.   The method of collecting data in claim 27, further comprising the step of manipulating at least one of the characteristics of said products including: price, packaging, orientation, arrangement, shelf positioning and aisle positioning.

29.   The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of providing a fulfillment module having executable instructions configured to receive purchase orders entered by a panelist through said panelist interface

30.   The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of providing a delivery module having executable instructions to implement the delivery of products according to said purchase orders.

31.   A computer-readable medium containing instructions for controlling a computer system to provide an in-channel marketing and product testing system, by:

generating a signal for transmitting a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products;

providing the transmission signal to a panelist interface configured to receive panelist input, said panelist interface configured to receive and display said virtual purchase environment;

displaying said virtual purchase environment to at least one panelist in communication with said panelist interface;

collecting a panelist's interactions with said virtual purchase environment through panelist input into said panelist interface;

providing a fulfillment module configured to receive purchase orders from said panelist interface; and

analyzing collected panelist's input in a research module in communication with said purchase environment module and said panelist interface.

32.   The method of claim 31, further comprising the step of manipulating the display of said virtual purchase environment in real-time.

33.   A method in a computer system for providing an in-channel marketing and product testing system, comprising the steps of:

providing a purchase environment module having instructions for generating a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products;

providing a panelist interface configured to receive panelist input, said panelist interface arranged in selective communication with said purchase environment module to receive and display the virtual purchase environment;

displaying said virtual purchase environment to at least one panelist in communication with said panelist interface;

collecting a panelist's interactions with said virtual purchase environment through panelist input into said panelist interface;

providing a fulfillment module configured to receive purchase orders from said panelist interface; and

providing a research module in communication with said purchase environment module and said panelist interface, to collect panelist input from said panelist interface to facilitate analysis thereof.

34.   The method of claim 33, further comprising the step of manipulating at least one of the characteristics of said products including: price, packaging, orientation, arrangement, shelf positioning and aisle positioning.

35.   A computer data signal embodied in a transmission medium comprising:

a source code segment which generates a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products;

said data signal further comprising a source code segment for soliciting and receiving panelist input from within said virtual purchase environment; and

said source code being transmitted to a panelist interface configured to receive said panelist input, said panelist interface configured to receive and display said virtual purchase environment

36.   A method of using a panelist interface for accessing an in-channel marketing and product testing system, comprising the steps of:

providing a panelist an identification record;

allowing a panelist in communication with said panelist interface to access said system

31

via panelist input comprising said identification record;

displaying a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products to the panelist in communication with said panelist interface;

collecting a panelist's interactions with said virtual purchase environment through panelist input into said panelist interface in communication with a research module and configured to receive said panelist input to facilitate analysis thereof; and

providing a fulfillment module configured to receive purchase orders from said panelist interface

37.   A computer-readable medium containing a data structure for providing an in-channel marketing and product testing system comprising:

providing a purchase environment module having instructions for generating a virtual purchase environment comprising a plurality of competitive products; said virtual purchase environment being capable of being manipulated in real-time;

providing a panelist interface configured to receive panelist input, said panelist interface arranged in selective communication with said purchase environment module to receive and display the virtual purchase environment;

displaying said virtual purchase environment to at least one panelist in communication with said panelist interface;

collecting a panelist's interactions with said virtual purchase environment through panelist input into said panelist interface; and

providing a research module in communication with said purchase environment module and said panelist interface, to collect panelist input from said panelist interface to facilitate analysis thereof.

38.   The method of claim 37, further comprising the step of providing a fulfillment module having executable instructions configured to receive purchase orders entered by a panelist through said panelist interface.